

## Testimony regarding HB 5037

Good afternoon, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and Members of the Appropriations Committee. I am Haley Parent, a sibling and guardian to my 27-year-old sister Amanda. I also manage one of The Kennedy Center's Day Programs, caring and advocating for the individuals under my care. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

My sister Amanda has been living in a group home setting since July of 2018. Since then, my family and I have watched my sister make significant gains in both her social skills and independence. Amanda loves her home and is happy there.

However, her happiness does not come without concerns, especially over the past two years. This is due in part to the COVID-19 pandemic and lack of sufficient staffing. I have noticed a more frequent change of staffing over the last two years. With each new staff member, there is training involved, as well as learning the individualized needs of everyone they care for. Without these consistently trained staff, I have noticed a decline in meeting her needs. She requires the use of her stander daily for strengthening, bone density, and increased range of motion. This necessity has been inconsistent due to lack of staff, or lack of knowledge from new staff that have not been trained on how to use her equipment. She is not allowed to use her power chair at her day program due to restrictions and social distancing. This has continued to make an impact on her independence as well as physical abilities, a right that every human deserves.

As for the individuals I serve in my day program, they too have suffered from lack of consistent staffing and support, much like my sister. Change in staffing can cause difficulty with transitions, and many of my individuals are left upset and confused when a beloved staff member leaves due to poor wages and being overworked. Many of them share their disdain that they do not have enough respite workers to taken them into the community. I consistently see job postings for Direct Support Professionals across all agencies, yet there is always a need. The individuals we serve rely on direct support providers most, as without us, their individual needs would not be met.

Direct support providers are crucial to the safety and well-being of those with developmental disabilities, including my daughter. It is important that we attract and retain direct support providers, as without them, our most vulnerable populations will be at risk and suffer. Providing the proper training and funding will allow providers to hire staff with a higher wage, hopefully retaining staff for consistency of our individuals.

Haley Parent  
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Sibling Advocate